
DISCUSSION POINTS OF THE MEDIATION SUPPORT NETWORK, No.1

SUPPORTING PEACE PROCESSES: IMPROVING COLLABORATION BETWEEN HUMANITARIAN, DEVELOPMENT, SECURITY AND MEDIATION ACTORS (13.SEPT.2011)

The Mediation Support Network (MSN) is a small, global network of organizations that support mediation in peace negotiations.¹ In its Helsinki meeting, 6-8 June 2011, the network discussed how to improve peace processes through a better collaboration between development, humanitarian, security and mediation actors. The following points reflect the MSN's discussion in Helsinki on this question. These points do not provide a comprehensive or consensus view of MSN members, but rather a reflection of key issues that were discussed and that may be useful food for thought for the upcoming OECD INCAF meeting 19-21 September 2011. The discussion clarified that there is a lack of synergetic collaboration between these different actors. Local and international, non-governmental and governmental actors often also have different visions and strategies concerning security, mediation and development. While each case is unique and the different roles overlap, some general patterns can be identified:

- *Mediators* seek to facilitate the emergence of a compromise between opposing parties, and to lay the groundwork for political processes that will provide non-violent alternatives for addressing the roots of conflict and managing conflict when it does emerge. As such they are called on to create inclusive mechanisms and channels for change, and to coordinate inputs from a wide variety of actors. The role of the mediation community is to uphold the integrity of the process and to help create democratic political structures and processes.
- *Security actors* seek to stabilize the security on the ground. They are involved from the initial contacts with parties and the first attempts to agree on a cessation of hostilities, the negotiations of DDR programs, and the implementation of security sector reforms after the signing of a peace agreement.
- *Humanitarian actors* are also involved from the start, with humanitarian accords and humanitarian aid often playing a vital role in both alleviating suffering and building

¹ <http://www.mediationsupportnetwork.net/> Members include Accord, Berghof Peace Support, Center for Peace Mediation, Crisis Management Initiative, Conciliation Resources, Center for Humanitarian Dialogue, Folke Bernadotte Academy, Initiative on Quiet Diplomacy, Mediation Support Unit of the United Nations, Mediation Support Project (Center for Security Studies ETH Zurich and swisspeace), United States Institute of Peace, West African Network for Peacebuilding.

confidence that will move armed groups toward a peaceful settlement.

- *Development actors* work in longer timeframes than do their humanitarian aid counterparts, and can play an important role in creating incentives for parties to come to the table, in clarifying longer-term development options and opportunities, and in ensuring inclusion of key stakeholders in aid discussions. Supporting actors to develop a socio-economic vision of a “viable state” can help provide direction to peace negotiations and build confidence between actors.

More specifically, and based on various case studies the MSN members examined, the following points were discussed:

1. *Clarifying various roles:* As the roles of these different sectors overlap in the context of conflict and become more complex with the unfolding of peace processes, greater clarity of the division of labor, perceptions and expectations of each set of actors can strengthen synergies between them and improve the sustainability of a peace process.
2. *Prejudicial aid practices:* A pre-condition for an effective peace process is for international actors to have a minimal consensus not to use development and security assistance to support one actor in detriment of another one, thereby working against the mediation logic.
3. *Talking with all actors:* The logic of mediation is to talk with all relevant actors who are willing to talk. There is a need to widen the space for mediation, e.g. by enhancing the praxis of talking with all actors and thereby gaining increasing support for this approach.
4. *Development and security models:* External support for different models of development or security can be a source of conflict. From a mediation perspective, development and security actors need to bring in different ideas without predetermining the outcome and choices of the parties. At the same time, mediation processes with actors that are not democratically legitimized can only decide on interim, transitional issues, and not pre-determine longer-term democratic decisions regarding a society’s development path.
5. *National Dialogues:* National dialogues can prepare the ground for participatory and inclusive democratic post-conflict structures. Development actors can support national dialogues through support structures, technical assistance and capacity building. Their support function can include technical, thematic, organizational, and administrative capacities. Development actors can often play this role well to the extent that they are perceived as being non-political. To maintain their evenhandedness, they need to be aware of and clearly define their attitude towards political agendas, paradigms and donor policies. Still, local ownership of decision-making concerning processes and structures is pivotal.
6. *Funding:* Most mediation efforts are poorly financed. Modalities to enhance the reliability and continuity of funding for peace processes are essential. Coordinated efforts between different donors can also provide greater sustainability to a peace process.